The Black Cat

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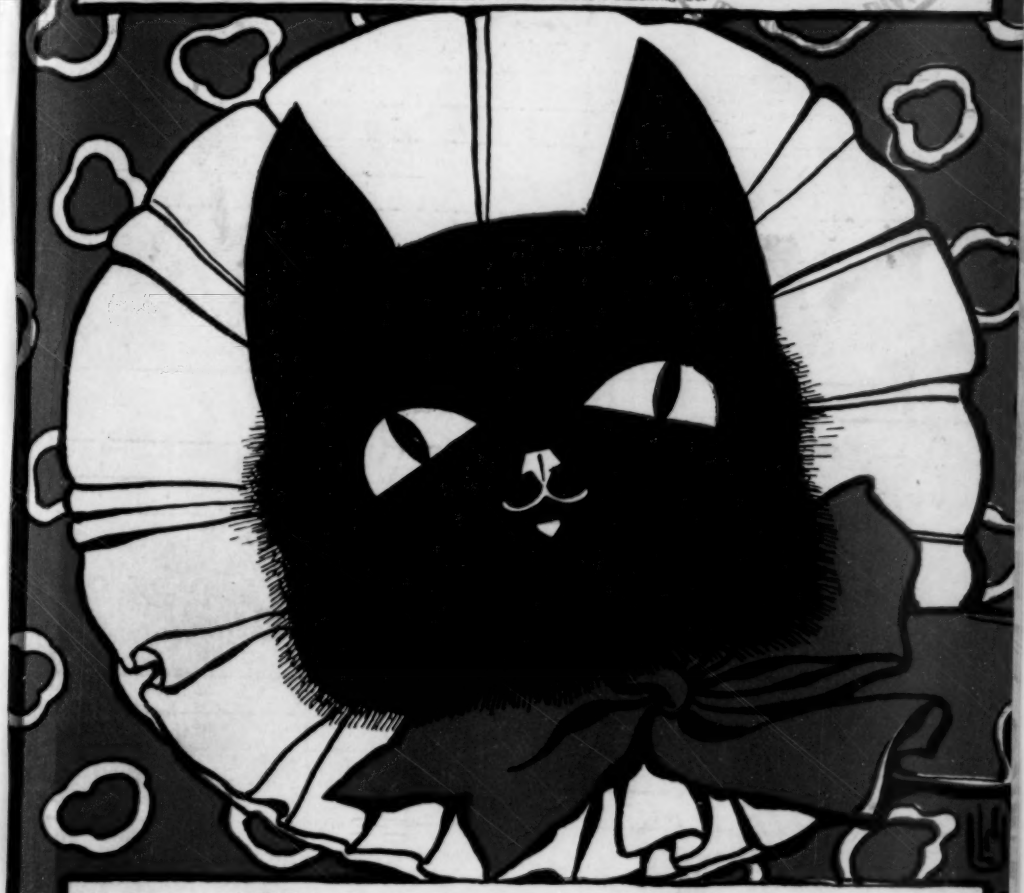

November 1901

Angela's Complexion.
H. J. W. Dam.

Handle with Care.
Charles Webster Kimball.

A Bachelor Girl's Husband.
$125 Prize Story.
Florence Edith Austin.

The Yellow Tuft.
David Bruce Fitzgerald.

An Exploded Theory.
Charles Forrest McLean.

5 CENTS

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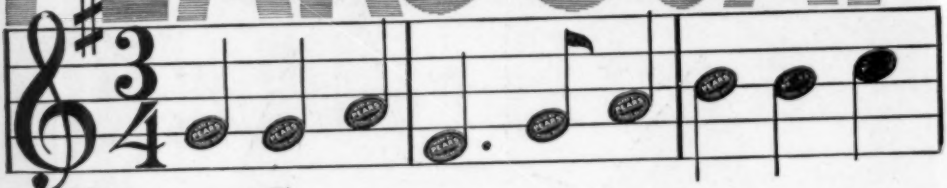
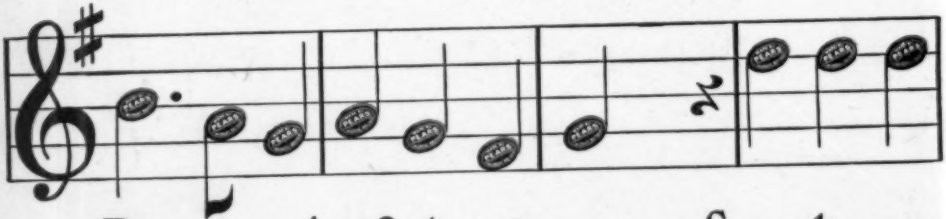
ONE SPEECH
ONE AIR
ONE SOAP

PEARS' SOAP

Pears' Soap! 'tis of thee, Sweet queen of



Pu - ri - ty! Of thee I sing; Soap by our

Fathers tried, Soap of two Nations' pride, Of thee on

every side, loud praises ring.

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The Black Cat

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Angela's Complexion.*

BY H. J. W. DAM.

WHY did not Lord Bembridge propose to Angela? What mysterious influence prevented him from asking for the heart and hand which, as he could not doubt, were wholly his in spirit? He had paid Angela the most marked attentions for many months, and this unanswered and unanswerable question was a source of great anxiety to the two widowed mothers and also a juicy and delightful subject for gossip at the tea-tables of Hampstead Hill. Gossip is a superficial and destructive criticism of social events which was born into the world, according to Mr. Darwin, when Eve took to dressmaking. When she presumably asked Adam's opinion upon her leafy princesse gown, and very probably abused him for not sharing her enthusiasm over it, the cult of chiffons began. In view of this respectable Biblical origin, and for later and more general reasons, gossip was highly esteemed on Hampstead Hill, and the facts which were invented, imagined and stated concerning Bembridge and Angela and the obstacles in the way of their marriage caused the two fond mothers much bitterness and great concern.

The Marquis of Bembridge, quiet, rather shy and twenty-five, was the last surviving male representative of a historic family.

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Angela Hathie, who was deeply in love with him, was a sweet, red and white, Christmas-apple kind of girl of nineteen. On this pleasant Sunday afternoon, when the two had gone out walking together in the inspiring glory of the rare London sunshine, Mrs. Hathie, Angela's mother, had posted herself in the bay window of the drawing-room, in order to watch their return unobserved, and she remained patiently at her post with the admirable tenacity of Casabianca, of the Roman soldier in the Liverpool gallery, and other types of extreme, if not excessive, devotion to duty. But as Bembridge left Angela at the steps, lifted his hat and crossed the avenue to his own house, Mrs. Hathie saw from the two faces that no change had taken place in the romantic situation, and she sighed. "Such a magnificent match for Angela!" What *could* be the trouble?

The news, however, was not long in forthcoming. Lady Bembridge, His Lordship's mother, came over to talk about things that evening, and rent the veil in twain. Her announcement caused all persons concerned to gasp with astonishment, and, perfect accuracy in these matters being ever desirable, the facts are best set forth in her own earnest words. She said:

"I lost my patience this afternoon. My son, as you know, is rather shy and rather peculiar and has never cared much about girls. But I knew he loved Angela, and so I went straight to the point. 'Herbert,' I said, 'What is the matter? You love Angela. Why don't you marry her?'

"'Because, Mother,' said he, 'I can't stand her complexion.'

"'What?' said I. 'She has the most beautiful complexion in the world. Snow and roses, strawberries and cream! What on earth do you want?'

"'There is no use in arguing over matters of taste,' he answered, 'I have very good eyes. I can't stand that dead bluish-gray in her skin, with the bluish and yellowish lights underneath. She must be horribly unhealthy. I love Angela. In nature and in character she is the dearest, sweetest girl I ever saw. But, Mother, her skin is something awful! It makes me sick. I'm sorry, but I can't help it. It — it's simply impossible!'"

Mrs. Hathie was immobile with horror and amazement. "He must be mad," she said.

How this vexatious course of true love would have progressed without the assistance of Uncle George can never be told. He, Sir George Hathie, was listening to the conversation, though he pretended to be reading an article in the *Lancet*, in which some new and trifling complaint affecting babies' eyes was discussed in angular and jagged words much longer than any ordinary baby and not half as pretty. His particular interest in the article and in the conversation was due to the fact that he was a very eminent oculist, in fact, the first in England. He was the main support of royalty in all its eye troubles, from the spectacles of a venerable Queen to the recalcitrant eyebrows of the fourth generation.

Sir George was a tall, thin, bony Scotchman, as eccentric in manner as he was peculiar in appearance. He had no hair on his face and very little upon his head. What little there was was closely clipped and light-colored and so nearly identical in hue with his freckled, parchment skin that he looked like a dried merman, or a preserved seer or a highly gifted mummy. As he laid down his paper, he turned to Lady Bembridge and gazed at her solemnly, something after the fashion of a large blond owl.

"He's of the opeenyon that Angela's skin is a bluish-gray?"

"Yes."

"With bluish and yellowish lights, I think ye were sayin'."

"Yes."

Sir George rubbed his nose with his left forefinger, twiddled his long, bony thumbs, pursed up his lips, and finally said, "Ah!" When great surgeons say "Ah!" ladies hold their breath. Mrs. Hathie and Lady Bembridge held theirs.

"Could I be pairmitted to spend an evening with Bembridge?"

"Do. For heaven's sake. Dine with us to-morrow, will you?"

"With pleasure," said Sir George. This was strictly true. As a Scotchman, he had a racial appreciation of a dinner at another person's expense, which no amount of riches of his own had sufficed to eradicate. He also foresaw a scientific problem which interested him in the highest degree.

Sir George, in fact, had a suspicion. At five o'clock on the following afternoon he stopped his landau in front of Peter Robinson's, the great dry-goods store on Oxford Street, entered the shop and asked for worsteds. He bought a large number of sam-

ples of bright-colored worsted, all the shades, in fact, which were on sale. After dinner that evening when he and the young Marquis were smoking in the latter's library, he said—

"By the way, Bembridge, I've pairchased some fine yóung horses and shall be startin' seeveral o' the youngsters in the flat racin' at Newmarket next season. I want your advice in the selection o' racin' colors. You should know all about such things, I think. Will you oblige me with your opeenyon?"

Lord Bembridge was small, slender, but wiry. He had black hair, black eyes, and a small black moustache. He was reserved in his dealings with men, but very positive in his opinions.

"I know all about that," he said.

"Now what would you think," said Sir George, with the conscienceless duplicity of a doctor and an uncle, "of chocolate 'n pink? They seem to go hairmoniously well together." And he laid twists of chocolate and pink worsted side by side upon the table in the full glare of the electric droplight.

"That's not pink," said the young man, promptly.

"Eh? No? And what would you call it, then?" asked Sir George, with admirably assumed ignorance.

"That's too much on the pearl. Get a better pink, something on the rose or scarlet. Here! Let *me* see!" said Bembridge.

Sir George spread two dozen hues of worsted on the table and the Marquis selected what appeared to him a true pink shade.

"I had some thoughts, do you know, of blue 'n yellow," said Sir George, with the sincerity of Red Riding Hood's wolf.

Bembridge selected for him a blue and a yellow, which, in his belief, were made for each other.

He also chose many other combinations which were duly discussed and debated. Then Sir George went home.

Mrs. Hathie was waiting for him, deeply anxious.

"Angela looks to him like a picked chick'n on a poult'rer's stall," said he, grimly.

"Oh, don't, George, don't," said the mother, covering her ears.

"He's color blind. Just a wee trifle, but it's makin' all this bother," he said.

"What is color blind?"

"His eyes don't see colors in th' natural — th' normal — way."

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Hathie, helplessly.

"Th' sensation o' 'green,' ma dear" — Sir George's Scotch-Irish accent always deepened when he was interested and spoke rapidly, — "the sensation which we call 'green,' ma dear, so-called by you 'n by me 'n by all pairsons with natural, normal eyes, is projuiced by waves o' light in th' ether ent'rin' th' aye 'n impingin' on th' retina — "

"Wait. Wait," said Mrs. Hathie. "Do give me time. Yes — yes — go on," she said.

" — Impingin' on th' retina at th' rate of five hundred meelyons of meelyons of waves pair second," said Sir George.

"Heavens!" said Mrs. Hathie. "He can *never* recover from that. Can he?" she added, timidly.

"Who?"

"Lord Bembridge."

"I'm not speakin' o' Bembridge. I'm speakin' o' your eyes, my eyes, every natural pairson's eyes."

"Of my eyes?"

"Of course."

"Er — yes — I see — go on," said she. The scientific waters were far beyond her depth, but, like a loving mother, she was ready to dare anything for her child's sake.

"Weell, now. Bembridge has some slight eeritation o' th' rods 'n cones o' th' retina."

Mrs. Hathie was looking away, not heeding what he said. She was asking if it were really best to entrust Angela's life happiness to anything so awful. If it had been a question of millions of millions of pounds sterling, her imagination would have endeavored to grasp it, even at the risk of a permanent strain. But Bembridge and his light-waves were taking on the forbidding aspect of the unknown.

"His veesual nairvous system accelerates," continued Sir George. "He's ahead o' color, somewhat. You'll understand what I mean if you imagine, f'r instance, that your red is his yellow, your yellow is his blue, 'n your blue is his violet. Am I pairfectly clear?" he asked, complacently.

"I suppose so. I'm sure *I* don't know anything about it."

"Consequently," said Sir George, in a triumphant tone, "all

that we need do is to alter Angela's complexion just a trifle — "

"Change Angela's complexion?" gasped her mother.

"Of course. Where's the hairm? You women are always messin' with your faces accordin' to your own views of beauty. Why not do somethin' practical to meet the pairsonal equation of a man an' a lover? If Angela now were a trifle more on the brown — a pale 'n delicate terra-cotta, f'r instance — "

"Were a what?"

"With a tint of maroon in th' centre of her cheeks, shadin' gradually outward — "

"Why not paint her in stripes? Make her a zebra? Why not give him his choice?" asked Mrs. Hathie, indignantly.

"If, like a dutiful an' lovin' child," he went on, tenaciously, "she met Bembridge's chromatic varriation as a bride should be willin' an' glad to do — Oh! I'm pairfectly certain o' the colors, pairfectly," said Sir George — "he'd think her th' most beautiful girrl in th' wirrld 'n pop at th' first convenient opporchunity."

"It's absurd, idiotic, preposterous," said the indignant mother.

"Then what were you expectin'?" asked Sir George, surprised, if not annoyed. He had looked for praise, if not acclamation, for his clever investigation. Women were so incomprehensible.

"I thought that you would cure Bembridge. Put his eyes straight. Can't you?"

"Well, ma dear," said her adviser, drily, "if he'd send his eyes down to my lab'ratory an' let me put 'em in pickle for a few years till we found out exactly what to do to 'em — "

But Angela now intervened, anxious for news, clad in a look of expectant inquiry and a light blue peignoir with lace insertions.

"My dear," said her mother, "Herbert's eyes are slightly affected. He does not see you as you are. Your complexion, in fact, is very distasteful to him."

"What?" asked Angela, surprised and hurt.

"Sir George knows exactly what's the matter. He suggests — his idea is that he — er — could touch you up a little — "

"A delicate terra-cotta now, with maroon centre in th' cheeks—"

"Terra-*cotta?* *MAROON?* I'll see Herbert in Jericho first."

"But, ma dear! Ye'll be married in a month," insisted her uncle. Her obstinacy seemed wholly un-Scotch.

"Lord Bembridge is MOST kind," said Angela, icily. "I could not *think* of such a thing."

The conflict was long and severe. No properly reared English girl ever permits herself to have any ideas or feelings until she has first submitted them for her mother's approval. Angela, hitherto, had been entirely submissive. Now she was defiant.

"What?" she cried. "I must paint my face because Herbert's eyes are queer! Who ever *heard* of such a thing? I suppose he'll want my hair salmon color and my feet pale blue. Why can't he take me as I am? I shall look like a magic-lantern slide—like a Japanese screen. I — I — "

She burst into tears.

None the less, marriage is a much more important thing in England than any petty prejudices against maroon and terra-cotta. Before Angela went to bed she had submitted, in spirit, to the imperative necessity of the hour.

Early next day Sir George sent for his chemist, and the two had a long and private consultation. The result was two colorless liquids which, when applied to white paper and dried, seemed to produce the effect they sought. They agreed at all events with the worsted, but did not agree equally with Angela. When Sir George personally applied them in her dressing-room the result did not last long enough to permit of exact observation. Angela looked in the glass and screamed. She looked like Pocahontas, a savage maiden. She also felt like her. She flew to the bathroom, and washed her face wildly.

On the second trial, about an hour later, she was more tractable, but again washed off the tint.

On the third essay, in which the shades were somewhat lightened, she was calm. Love had triumphed. She took a more active interest in the proceedings and even made suggestions bearing upon the regions below her ears and her neck. More at ease, her fancy now awoke and she wondered how she would have looked if she had been a real brunette, but not the copper kind. Angela, in fact, was in love, and Herbert, in fact, was coming to dinner. Sir George's theory was about to be submitted to a critical test.

Sir George was calmly confident; Mrs. Hathie was uneasy, and

Angela was extremely nervous, but all went well until half-past six, when a carriage stopped at the door. It contained Grandpa and Grandma Chartrey, Mrs. Hathie's father and mother, who had driven in from Twickenham and proposed to stay all night. They were people of great wealth and Angela was their favorite grandchild. This was an unexpected complication and some explanation of Angela's Kate Greenaway or pre-Raphaelitic condition was imperative. Otherwise Grandma, at dinner, would certainly let slip the terra-cotta cat from the color-blind bag and Lord Bembridge would be angry and hopelessly estranged.

"You tell father and mother, George? Will you?" asked Mrs. Hathie. "But don't say anything about millions of millions and things. They'll never believe you."

"Mr. Chartrey," said Sir George, "are ye at all fameeliar with color blindness?"

"Not at all," said Grandpa, shortly. He was seventy-four, tall, English and obstinate. What he had not heard of did not exist. This opening was not encouraging.

"We — we're hopin' Angela will marry Lord Bembridge," continued Sir George. "It would be a fine match for Angela."

"Excellent match! His father was my fag at Eton." This topic appealed to Grandpa. He had never done anything in his life except hoard his money and his whole social solar system revolved about Eton as a centre.

"Bembridge's eyes are a bit queer. There's no doubt o' that," continued the oculist, feeling his way.

"There was always something queer in his family," said Grandpa. "Do you know, his father once solemnly assured me that the Dog Star was approaching the earth at the rate of four million miles per diem. I had every confidence in him and believed it. In fact, I was somewhat concerned over the matter for several days, but as nothing ever happened I saw what was wrong." And Grandpa touched his head and nodded significantly. "Harmless delusion," he said.

Supposing that all had been prepared for her entry, Angela in a low-necked girl's evening dress now tripped into the drawing-room. She looked like a pale, cloudy bromine print by a developing amateur.

"Ah, my dear," said Grandpa, kissing her. "Glad to see you looking so well. Healthy color! Good, honest sunburn, that! Nothing like plenty of open air for our girls!"

Grandpa's eyes were not in the best state of repair. For which affliction, Angela breathed devout thanks.

"For goodness' sake! What's the matter with Angela?" screamed Grandma.

"Eh? What? She — she's sunburnt," said Sir George.

"Sunburnt? Absurd! She's got something. Is it the plague? Will somebody *please* tell me what it is?"

"She has — er — tinted her face a little," said Mrs. Hathie. "Lord Bembridge, you know. He — he likes girls of that color."

"Then he must be mad," snapped Grandma. "What does he want? Chocolate girls at seven for sixpence? She's awful! She's a sight! Mary, how *could* you let her?"

Angela said nothing. She was now hardened to all earthly bitterness. One pair of eyes only was important. One voice alone could pronounce her ectasy or her despair. She was waiting for her lover and her lover came.

Lady Bembridge upon seeing her started slightly, but said nothing. She was fully informed.

Not so her son. "Angela!" he cried out in unmistakable delight. "What have you done to yourself?"

His admiration was too evident to be doubted. Sir George rubbed his bony hands in silent glee. Mrs. Hathie was immensely relieved. Grandma was immensely astonished.

"D — done?" stammered Angela. Tears came to her eyes. She felt painfully ridiculous and she felt so sorry for Herbert.

"You're so beautiful," he continued, in unchecked enthusiasm. "I — I should scarcely have known you," he added, in blunt sincerity.

"Whaur's th' picked chick'n now?" chuckled Sir George, highly pleased with himself.

"I'm glad you're pleased," said Angela, now quiet and happy.

Sir George's accuracy of measurement was undeniable. The young lover showed a love, an admiration, a tenderness for Angela which he had never before revealed. He was clearly in that

state which calls for a conservatory, palms, a quiet nook, and shaded lights. Everybody was perfectly happy at dinner, except Grandma. She had a Roman nose and, after the manner of her kind, was difficult to suppress.

"What did you say that stuff is?" she demanded.

"Sh — h!" said Mrs. Hathie gently, mainly in pantomime.

"But is she like that all over?"

Lady Bembridge adroitly turned the old lady towards candles and the use of incense. Grandma was a rabid Low Church partisan and eager for the fray. She gave no further trouble.

About ten o'clock Angela came to her mother, from the conservatory, in a confused chromatic condition, consisting of blushes, terra-cotta, and certain obscurations, or sun spots, which looked much like the effect of masculine ardor.

"Oh! Mother! Herbert *does* love me! Dear Herbert! What shall I say?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you didn't say yes at once?"

"I — I — perhaps I did. I don't remember exactly. But what shall I do when I'm married? I can't be a tropical water color all my life, can I?"

"Sir George will see to that. He's having some colored glasses made."

And from this point onward all was serene till the marriage. The courtship having been long, the engagement was short. They were married at Angela's home, with the curtains down and the candles lighted. Everybody present understood the situation except the bridegroom and greatly enjoyed it. The "color-blind marriage" was a topic of the juiciest for the petticoat parliament of "The Hill."

None the less, a catastrophe was not only in imminent prospect, but close at hand. While these well-intentioned plotters had been engaged in circumventing Dame Nature in this loving fashion, that good lady had been exceedingly busy on her own account. As the general manager of all affairs connected with love and matrimony she had been bringing matters to a successful termination in her own wise way, but she had been neglected and overlooked. Consequently there came a clash of plans and woeful trouble.

Many small nervous derangements which may affect the system

are cured by excitement. This is what Nature wants, excitement and rapidly circulating blood, to enable her to lift the little burdens which she cannot remove under ordinary circumstances.

Now the ceremony of marriage is a very exciting thing. There are many strong men who will face a Maxim without a qualm, but show every inclination to flee from a minister. To face the cannon's mouth seems to require much less self-control than is sometimes needed at a wedding, in order to face the mouth of one's bride. For four weeks Bembridge had been under the greatest repressed excitement. Naturally shy, the wedding ceremony was an ordeal from which he shrank, and here it was, in this excitement and perturbation, that Nature found her repairing opportunity. By the day of the marriage, his eyes were perfectly normal and perfectly well.

Pursued by rice and slippers, they set out for Euston Station. In the most luxurious of private cars they rolled away on their journey to the north. And then, alone, Bembridge tenderly passed his arm around his little bride and gently lifted her thick, white travelling veil.

"Oh!" he said, recoiling in dismay.

"Wh — what is it?" asked Angela, frightened.

"That — that's what *I* want to know," said the bridegroom. "What is it? You look like a copper saucepan."

"Oh!" screamed Angela, heart-broken. "I knew it! I knew it!" Her eyes filled, her lip quivered, and then this happy little bride began to cry.

"It — you see — I'll tell you all about it — I knew it would make trouble," sobbed she, and the salt, if loving, tears which ran down her cheeks with new and original chemical results made his dear little wife worse than ever. She was visibly brindling.

"Tell me what? You knew that what would make trouble?"

"Your eyes. They — they are queer. They are too much in a hurry about colors and things and light-waves. There's millions of them and — and — my red is your yellow, and when it's my yellow it's your blue, you know, — only you don't know, you're not conscious of it," she sputtered, in love and tears.

"Angela!" he gasped. "What *is* the matter with you?" He feared she was insane.

"But Sir George says so. He did this. And you said I was beautiful — beautiful. Don't you remember? The night that you — the night of the dinner. That's what you said."

"Were you like this at the dinner?"

"Yes."

"And I never noticed it?"

"You thought I was lovely."

"But it's impossible! You might have put something on, but you couldn't possibly have looked like that!"

"But I did — I did," sobbed Angela. And then she broke down entirely and he felt like crying too as he kissed her and consoled her and assured her that he would always love her just the same, whatever might be the variations in her spectrum analyses, so to speak. And he meant this, too, with all his heart.

"But what can we do?" asked Angela, hopelessly.

"It doesn't matter in the least to me, dear, but still, I suppose, we'd better know exactly where we stand so that I — er — so that I can get used to it, and I think, dear, perhaps — er — perhaps you'd better wash your face."

Into the dressing-room she went and washed her face in soap, in water, in tears and in trepidation. He walked up and down the car, deeply grieved that on this memorable day she should have been made unhappy. Then she came out and stood still, awaiting his verdict in hopeless misery.

"Angela," he cried, "what a beautiful complexion! Snow and roses, strawberries and cream, how *could* you ever spoil it?"

And the Cupid youngster, who was watching all this from the top of a dressing-case in infinite glee, laughed so hard and so silently that he had a pain. But Angela and Bembridge laughed too and were so supremely happy that Care jumped off the flying train in disgust and was never heard from again.

But Bembridge, to this day, does not really believe a word of it. "Sir George is all very well as an oculist," he says, "but what does an old bachelor know about love?"

Handle with Care.*

BY CHARLES WEBSTER KIMBALL.

JUST before the breaking out of the war between China and Japan in 1894, Richard Breck had been commissioned as ensign in the United States Navy, and was looking forward to a placid cruise on one of the ships of the North Atlantic squadron. But, like most youngsters who have just doffed a middy's uniform and blossomed out into a real officer, Dick Breck was at heart athirst for the glory of actual warfare, and hearing that commissions in the Chinese Navy were to be had for the asking by graduates of Annapolis, he determined to secure a leave of absence and try for one. Through family influence in the department, he obtained a six-months' leave, with the assurance of an extension for three months. With this arranged, he engaged a berth in a sleeper of the Overland Mail, crossed to San Francisco, and within a week was on the Pacific, bound for Shanghai. From that port a coastwise steamer took him, by way of Chee Foo, to Port Arthur. This was before that stronghold had fallen into the hands of the Japanese, and there he found Admiral Charles, an Englishman and former sub-lieutenant in the British Navy, at the head of Chinese naval affairs. Breck soon came to an understanding with the admiral, and left the office carrying in his pocket a commission as Fleet Mandarin in the Chinese Navy, an office corresponding to that of captain in the United States service.

Next day Breck waited upon the admiral and received his sailing orders. He found that he was to go to Wah Foo, a trip of five hundred miles, take command of a torpedo boat that had just been completed at the native shipyard there, and bring the boat around to Port Arthur.

"You're just the man I want for that," the admiral said.

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"We've had three torpedo boats built at Wah Foo, and each one has been lost on the way here — through the cursed ignorance of those Chinese officers or engineers. The coast is safe enough for a white man with sense — it's only those junk sailors who would get into trouble."

That afternoon Captain Breck left for Wah Foo on the government railway, accompanied by George Barstow, formerly an oiler on an English tramp, who was to act as the torpedo boat's engineer. For three days they toiled along the line in stuffy cars drawn by a broken-down French locomotive, the vile fumes of the opium smoked by their fellow-passengers, who chattered of the "foreign devils" and made faces at them behind their backs, together with the dreariness of the landscape, making them heartily sick of the journey before they had gone a hundred miles.

Late at night they reached their destination, a squat, poverty-stricken little Chinese village near the coast. At the mud hut called a railway station they found two coolies waiting with a sedan chair. A wheelbarrow coolie took their luggage and they were carried through the dirty streets to the yamen of the Viceroy, who was in charge of the dockyard where the boat they were to command had been built. His house was the typical Chinese official residence — gorgeous to behold, but exceedingly untidy and ramshackle. They were shown to a room, tea and cigarettes were brought and their beds were pointed out, but they saw nothing of their host.

In the morning, however, a servant announced that it was the pleasure of the Viceroy to meet them at breakfast, and the meal proved better than the general appearance of the yamen had led them to hope, while His Excellency they found to be a middle-aged Chinaman of very pleasant appearance, speaking good English. After breakfast, all three went down to the shipyard to take a look at the boat. The yard was surrounded by a high wall whose locked and barred gate was opened to them by a huge north-country coolie with a bunch of keys at his girdle. With this janitor in the lead, the party walked through the yard, between rows of low mud-brick buildings, one of which appeared to be the boat shop, as it had ways running down to the water. The Viceroy kept up a running talk on the war and its phases, preventing

various questions about the establishment which the American would have liked to ask.

As Breck and his companion stepped upon the torpedo boat, which was moored to a wharf near the boat shop, they noticed that their arrival had apparently been awaited, as there was fire under the boilers, smoke poured from the funnels and everything on deck was lashed snug, ready for sea. Barstow, eager to enter upon his new dominion, dove below into the engine room, while Breck and the Chinese mandarin inspected the other parts of the craft. She was a very trim little boat, built after a Herreshoff model and provided with triple-expansion engines of American make. Her armament consisted of two one-pounder rapid-fire guns, one mounted atop the tiny wheel turret forward and the other abaft the funnels, together with a stationary torpedo tube built into the forward end of the boat. The deck was covered with canvas, which, together with the whole boat, had been given a couple of coats of olive-colored paint. She had accommodations forward for five men and her cabin was elegantly fitted up for two officers. Altogether she looked a craft that any man would be proud to command, and Breck was instantly captivated with it. As he and the Viceroy came on deck from a final look at the cabin, Barstow appeared from below with the report that all was going nicely in his department, with prospect of steam enough for a start within an hour.

Breck was anxious to see the shop that had turned out so creditable a piece of work, and as there was nothing immediate to require the presence of himself and his engineer on board, he turned to the Viceroy with the question:

"Would Your Excellency be so kind as to take us through your shops?"

The change that came over the bland and smiling face of the Chinaman at these simple words was strange and startling. His almond eyes took on a look of malignant suspicion and he glared at Breck and Barstow with the air of a dog about to be robbed of a bone. It was only for a moment. Then the Viceroy remembered himself, forced a smile, and said with an apologetic air:

"Pardon me, gentlemen, for refusing you, but I am having secret tests made in the shops that strange eyes may not observe,

even though they belong to two such honorable officers of the Emperor. You see, I make ammunition, and my workmen are compounding a smokeless powder that will bring me fortune and make the name of the empire as famous throughout the world as it is already for the invention of black powder. You will realize how such a secret must be guarded, but I will mention that among the precautions taken there are men posted at every loophole, with orders to shoot down any one who enters the yard without a guide — so that I cannot even vouch for the safety of any one who leaves the ship."

After this pointed speech the conversation flagged and in a few moments the Viceroy bade the officers good-bye, saying in leaving:

"You will have no occasion for going ashore. I wish you a pleasant voyage."

As he was turning the corner of the nearest building, a thought occurred to Breck — the boat had no name painted in the usual place, nor did it appear on any of her various articles of gear.

"One moment, Your Excellency," he shouted. "What is the name of our vessel?"

"Ying Chuen," replied the Viceroy, smilingly, as he disappeared.

"I thought the old chap was going to jump on you when you asked to go through the shops," said Barstow, when the Chinese mandarin had gone. "I don't half believe his yarn about smokeless powder. 'Twouldn't surprise me if he was running a counterfeiting establishment in there — he's so touchy about it. I don't see what else these retorts and that mill could be for."

Barstow pointed to a row of ovens and a sort of pug-mill, similar to those used in crushing ore for a smelter, and alongside the ovens stood a row of wheelbarrows, smeared with white clay.

"We'd best not trifle with the Chinamen," said Breck, reflecting. "Behind these guns we are safe, but if we had any trouble with a Viceroy no Chinese court-martial would ever justify us for defending ourselves, and we'd have to quit the country. I'll report his highness to the admiral, and if there's anything to be done, he can do it."

In the wheel house Breck found charts of the coast, evidently

copied by a Chinese artist from those of the British Admiralty. On one of them he soon located Wah Foo, and found that it lay about six miles from the mouth of a river. He spent some time in plotting out a course to Port Arthur, and when, about four o'clock, Barstow announced somewhat impatiently that everything had long been ready for a start, he ordered the five coolies to cast off. The tide was on the ebb, and as the boat swung away from the wharf toward the centre of the river, he gave the signal for starting the engines. She answered her helm beautifully, and the engines, at half speed, sent her through the water at an easy gait of ten miles an hour. The shores widened as they glided down towards the river's mouth, and shortly the tossing white caps showed the open sea. As Breck looked about to get his bearings, he thought he made out the smoke of a vessel outside the bar, and a pair of binoculars proved that he was right. A small gunboat, flying Japanese colors, was steaming across outside, evidently on patrol.

At this unexpected development — for Breck had not known that the blockade had been extended as far as Wah Foo — he thought best to confer with Barstow, and ringing for quarter-speed ran in under the weather shore and ordered the anchor to be let go.

"What do you think of that?" he said to the engineer, whom the rattle of the cable in the hawse-hole had brought on deck. "Had we better attempt to run the blockade now, or wait for darkness?"

"Wait, by all means. Besides, I've got a hot bearing that a couple of hours' rest will cure."

With a skirmish in prospect should they be discovered in the darkness, Breck set the coolies at work to get things in readiness for action, and they soon had a half-dozen boxes of the one-pounder shells on deck in a convenient but sheltered place. With the thoroughness of his American training, Breck tested the calibre of one of the shells. It fitted perfectly the bore of the gun, and he was about to replace it in its box, when it slipped and fell to the deck. After the involuntary jump natural under such circumstances, he stooped and carefully picked up the supposed missile, and was barely able to repress a second start of sur-

prise and horror at what he saw. What should have been a projectile of hardened steel, capable of making its mark on the thickest battleship armor, *had broken into a dozen pieces.*

As Breck examined the fragments, he saw that they were not steel but porcelain, skilfully moulded and glazed to represent a projectile. The brass case was genuine, but, instead of powder, it was filled with a black sand that brought the whole up to about the proper weight. He called the engineer and showed him the imitation shell, and together they overhauled the boxes and found them all filled with similar dummies.

Then the explanation came to them of the Viceroy's strange actions, the closed shops, the ovens and the pug-mill and the clayey wheelbarrows. No doubt the rascal had stocked half the ships of the navy with his clever porcelain shells which, with cheap labor, would cost not a tenth part of the money required for the manufacture of genuine ones.

Breck was in a quandary. Evidently, nothing was to be gained by going back, the Viceroy having proved a man with whom it would be exceedingly unwise and unsafe to deal. On the other hand, it looked easy enough to run by the Japanese gunboat in the dark, and upon that they determined.

The two officers lingered over an excellent Chinese dinner, supplemented by some superb cigarettes, till nine o'clock came upon them unawares, when Barstow put on his overalls and went on deck, leaving Breck to take a few more puffs. But the engineer had not been gone three minutes before he came tumbling down the companionway.

"Captain!" he cried. "Captain, we've been deserted! Every man jack of the crew has skipped ashore in the starboard boat. And can you guess why?"

"They must have seen us discover those dummies!" exclaimed Breck.

"Worse than that. See this!"

Barstow handed out a great chip or flake of porcelain, glazed, and in appearance similar to the pieces of the broken shell, but much larger.

"Captain Breck," said Barstow, "this whole boat's built of china. She's nothing but a skin of baked clay rivetted to an iron

frame. I found this chip on the floor of the fireroom. One of the coolies had flaked it off the side of the bunker while trimming coal. The crew are all from another part of the province, and didn't see the boat till she was ready for sea, and as soon as they found out that there was nothing but a crockery shell between them and the bottom of the sea they jumped ship!"

"A ship of porcelain? impossible!" exclaimed Breck, as he followed Barstow on deck, where they leaned over the side and scraped away a bit of the paint. Underneath was earthenware. They went below and tested spot after spot. Everywhere it was the same. The framework was of steel, but instead of the steel plates that should have composed the skin of the vessel there were slabs of a coarse china — not the costly kind used in the manufacture of vases, but a tougher sort — rivetted with copper to the frame and ribs.

The whole of the Viceroy's scheme revealed itself with a rush. Steel, the proper raw material for shell making and boat building, could only be imported at a cost that would have left the Viceroy but moderate profit. His infernal ingenuity, starting with the dummy shell, had evolved this plan of building cheap boats that would be destroyed, with the evidence of his guilt, on encountering a heavy sea or an enemy's shell. The boat-builder was safe. The torpedo boats had left him in good condition — after he had received his pay — and what became of them was no concern of his. Breck's flesh crept as he thought of the probable fate of the three other boats the admiral had mentioned as having been lost after leaving Wah Foo.

The two officers talked over the situation, and agreed that, while they would have liked to go to war in charge of a genuine torpedo boat, there was little satisfaction in fighting the battles of a nation of people like the Viceroy in a china bowl.

"I know what would be the result of a complaint to the Chinese Government," said Barstow. "The Viceroy has every official palm oiled, all the way to Pekin, and in spite of all the admiral could do for us, we'd lose our commissions, and probably our heads, if we complained. We'd best drive this ballyhoo on the rocks and give ourselves up to the commander of that Jap gunboat outside."

So, packing their kits, they tumbled them into the remaining

small boat, Barstow started the engines and Breck swung the vessel's stem around to where the shore line showed black against the stars and lashed the helm. Then he jumped into the port boat with his companion and shoved off.

Next morning the Japanese gunboat picked them up, and to her commander, a fine young fellow, they made a clean breast of the whole affair. As they declared that they had ceased to harbor any designs against his government and considered their Chinese commissions cancelled, he agreed to consider them as refugees. True to his word, he put them on board the first Japan-bound transport that came along.

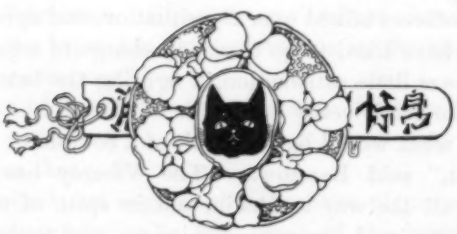
The day before they left, the Japanese commander took the gunboat close enough in shore to get a good look at the remains of the sham craft, high and dry, a tangled wreck of steel ribs and broken pottery.

"By the way," said the Japanese officer, taking notes for a report to his government, "what was the name of your torpedo boat?"

"The Ying Chuen," answered Breck.

The Japanese burst out laughing.

"Truly," he chuckled, "your Viceroy was a humorist as well as a shrewd swindler. In the Chinese vernacular, 'Ying Chuen' means 'earthen jar!'"



A Bachelor Girl's Husband.*

BY FLORENCE EDITH AUSTIN.

HIS open letter to the public is to explain the brief widowhood (grass or otherwise) of the recent Mrs. Crispin Sin Claire, née Luton.

In order to exculpate her and all involved from the serious charges preferred against them, and also to explain why no marble shaft will be erected to a poet's memory, it is necessary to revert to the cause of all the trouble.

Reticent and retiring, faultless of feature, statuesque in manner, monosyllabic of speech, eloquent with pen, is a compendious description of the late Crispin Sin Claire.

His name had been familiar to the literary world for several years previous to his advent into society, and for weeks antedating his début at Willowwild he had been observed by its suburbanites strolling about the estate or along the rural roads, in the company of his aunt, Mrs. Derwent Luton.

He was essentially a man without a history, so far as the Willowwildites could learn. He had arrived from that vaguely comprehensive place called "abroad," his antecedents were problematical, and his past and future a gossipy surmise, while the Luton family seemed to constitute themselves a bodyguard between him and an inquisitive world.

Following his formal introduction he appeared in public with gratifying frequency, but always as the devoted escort of his aunt, whose side he never left.

The only concession he made to the popular idea of a poet was in his rhymes. But while his verses testified that he possessed perception, passion, brain-power and the capacity for conveying his emotions, his features gave no hint of observation or expres-

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $125 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending March 31, 1900.

sion. His fine, dark eyes seemed to look afar into space and to see nothing — a peculiarity rather disconcerting to those who attempted to cultivate him — and his utterances were restricted to but little more than the "ohs" and "ahs" and "indeeds" that pass for polite conversation. Mr. Crispin Sin Claire was a literary but not a social success, and he became other than pleasantly known for his coldness, taciturnity and hauteur.

Yet there was something about the man — a certain peculiar distinction, a bizarre, effeminate fineness of features and coloring — that made him attractive, as painting and sculpture attract.

The Luton household consisted of Mr. Derwent Luton, who presented a vastly larger appearance in the world of intellect than in the world of matter; Mrs. Derwent Luton; Mr. Luton's orphaned niece, Electra, and that phantasmal poet, Crispin Sin Claire.

Mrs. Luton was a vivacious woman, who loved society and indulged in it much more frequently after the arrival of her nephew than before — for she was one of the ivy type that seems to require a masculine arm — and both her husband and Electra shunned a whirl with her into the mad vortex as assiduously as she avoided the laboratory where they dallied with cyanide of potassium, sulphuric acid, and the like, in quantities, as she averred, sufficient to blow northern Illinois off the face of the map.

But explosives really were not a specialty with the twain, for Mr. Luton and Electra were colleagues close upon achieving one of the world's great prizes by solving the problem of aerial navigation. In a very short time they hoped to write Q. E. D. after the Darius Green proposition of

> "Some birds can fly,
> And why can't I?"

Reared in her father's workshop, Electra was as familiar with influence machine coils, alternators and current controllers as the mass of femininity are with the folderols of fashion. Except for soft brown hair, eyes that talked, carmine lips and a fortune that spoke for itself, she was quite unlike the ordinary run of women. In her the currents of ancestral civilization seemed to meet and eddy and sparkle in the play of contradictory tendencies.

Perhaps her unique individuality was in part due to her unusual

name, for her father, the celebrated Sylvester Luton, had insisted on christening Electra after the natural force he worshipped, and Electra, through that fatality of nomenclature, was living out her name ; not in a pyrotechnic manner, but as a serene iconoclast, who scorned the ways of other women.

From infancy, almost, she had been the assistant and associate of her father, and had come to prefer for society that of the best and cleverest of her own class — the skilled workmen of the brain. But when, upon her orphanage, she became the care and anxiety of her aunt, the conservative Mrs. Luton endeavored with delicate tact, to instruct her in the becoming interests of women.

"Oh, this shibboleth of woman's sphere!" wailed Electra. "Why try to apportion out spheres while individual endowments are distributed so unequally? Moreover, I object to being labelled. I insist on my right to my own ego, to be one peculiar thing, not one of a gregarious group."

And so, to Mr. Luton's delight and Mrs. Luton's despair, Electra was permitted to work out her ego in her uncle's laboratory, and discourse of ohms and amperes.

Although Electra had declared her preference for the world of men, she had numerous suitors whom she flouted and rejected, and those who knew her doubted if she ever found a mate. It was then, to the astonishment of all, that her marriage was announced from abroad to that remarkably silent young man, Crispin Sin Claire.

Society gossiped for a fortnight over the remarkable match — their two natures seeming so antipodal, Sin Claire's manner appearing even more strikingly chill and self-centred beside Electra's genial *empressement*.

And the enigma of the match was not solved, even after the return of the bridal twain. Their mutual attitude was manifestly unaltered, the poet still his aunt's attentive escort, while Electra and her uncle toiled in the companionship of the laboratory.

It was the following spring but one that Herr Emil von Bernhard, of Teutonic origin, agreed to pool brains with Mr. Luton and Mrs. Sin Claire in conquering the few remaining difficulties of aeronautics.

Through some scientific journal they had chanced to discover

that they three were working upon the same theory of aerial flight — Von Bernhard in the heart of Rineland, the Lutons in the mid-west of the new world, where their ample grounds, on the sandy shores of Lake Michigan, were peculiarly adapted to aeronautic experiments.

With bag and baggage and a carload of paraphernalia, Von Bernhard was welcomed at Willowwild one warm April night. He was young, tall, nervous, self-confident — a characteristic type of his vocation.

"My niece," said Mr. Luton, carelessly presenting Electra. "My niece," absently repeated Von Bernhard, bowing with a greater ceremony than is observed by our republican autocrats, and then stood upright to look upon what was for him henceforth the fairest face on earth.

Electra smiled, amused at his unconscious repetition.

"Permit me to introduce my husband and my aunt," she said, as Mrs. Luton came into the drawing-room on the poet's arm.

The gentlemen saluted each the other — the foreigner after the effusive custom of his country, Mr. Sin Claire in a cold, dignified manner, as though oblivious of such an atomic affiliation as Herr Emil von Bernhard.

Then Mrs. Luton and the poet proceeded to their evening of dissipation, while the trio of scientists drifted over to the laboratory, unable to wait until the morrow to commence collaboration. And the days that followed saw them working in unison as only so much finely organized brain matter can blend and evolve the greater results.

To Von Bernhard Electra was a revelation in feminine potentialities. She went about the laboratory with the easy, unembarrassed grace of one in her proper sphere, and proceeded with her work like a person whose nerves and muscles are well in tune and whose spirits and hopes are high.

Von Bernhard, with youthful conceit, had flattered himself that he possessed the philosophic and scientific mind; he piqued himself on thinking clearly, and was intolerant of any inconsistency. Yet, in the presence of Electra, he felt himself a sort of human chaos. He had old-fashioned ideas regarding women and old-fashioned honor; he was an ultra-mediævalist in morals; but, in

defiance of all preconceptions, he perceived that he was passing through all the phases of an unwilling infatuation.

He fluttered about the flame with the determination of yet rescuing himself. But he was shocked and horrified to discover his sense of honor weakening as his love waxed warmer with the days of spring and grew with the grass of the fields.

Of nights he would waken with thrills of affright and self-loathing to recall that he had been dreaming of devious ways of disposing of her connubial encumbrance and possessing Electra for himself.

Spiritually he was adrift, mentally he was hindered, and the aeroplane progressed but slowly.

Electra's constant presence was not conducive to self-mastery. Like many women, she suggested a strange mixture of folly and the subtlest wisdom. She seemed ready and strong enough to move the world of science, and yet, siren-wise, she appeared to be deliberately heaping fuel upon the fires of his passion. That she was *ennuyée* with her jingle-stringing spouse, Von Bernhard quickly inferred, and he was conscious of a sense of irritation growing up in him against that superb egotist, with his air of mystery and his unmistakable indifference to his wife and the world — the indifference of an arctic temperament.

He saw him but seldom. Except when he went out socially with Mrs. Luton, the poet was locked in his study, where only his aunt intruded. He never appeared at table, his devoted relative explaining that he was dyspeptic as well as poetic. That this affliction might in part account for his profound isolation, Von Bernhard was charitable enough to concede, but Sin Claire's persistent apathy would at times exasperate the Teuton to thoughts at which he would shudder. His case was desperate — he himself was desperate.

In the din of the workshop, where a corps of workmen was engaged in the construction of an experimental model of their aeroplane, Von Bernhard would pause in his work to gaze at Electra, but the moment she became conscious of his intent regard the sensitive blood would rise in a crimson tide, and the dimple near the corner of her mouth would deepen to a smile and literally riot as though with some delightful secret she would like to tell,

but which hung unspoken on her lips. Had she read his heart, and was she, a wedded woman, openly encouraging him, he wondered. Then the testimony of her clear, honest eyes, strong features and noble mien would rise up to shame him — she evidently did not understand the hot blood of Siegfried and Lohengrin that surges through Teuton veins.

But one late summer day the greater trial came when he unwittingly surprised the love-light in Electra's eyes, and like a lightning stroke came the realization that she, too, had forgotten her irrevocable compact of "until death do us part."

Another month would see their test aeroplane a-field, or rather, as they hoped, a-sky; but for the honor and the sake of both he dared not delay. He knew what true love for her and a true regard for his own integrity and for his host alike demanded — that he should go at once and leave her, not to an adoring husband, but to that ice-brained biped, who would in time chill all the joy of living from her loving, pulsing heart.

Electra might have been the Lorelei incarnate that last long afternoon and through the seemingly endless courses of Dead Sea apples at that last dinner. She did not sing "Eine wundersame gewaltige Melodie," but she seemed surcharged with witty sallies, gay stories and a vivacity magnetic.

"She has either failed to recognize her own love or is innocent of mine," concluded Von Bernhard, as he endeavored with mock merriment to respond to her.

At wearisome length the gentlemen were left to their incense of Havana, and Von Bernhard prepared to face the most miserable moment of his life, the most humiliating. He lighted a weed absently, but it died a fragrant death between his fingers.

Mr. Luton had passed on to his second cigar when his wandering glance was arrested by something in the countenance of his guest, and he realized that Von Bernhard had been playing but a Greek chorus of assent to his desultory chatter.

"Why! what has happened to you, man? You look as though you were 'fit for treasons, strategems and spoils.'"

"I am, or have been," confessed Von Bernhard, "at least the wraith of some Gothic ancestor has been haunting me with sanguinary suggestions; but I remember that I belonged to the

enlightened nineteenth century, and hence my duty to the age will hasten me away from here to-morrow."

"Going away! Why, man, we cannot spare you just when we are threatened with success."

"I had hoped to depart without the humiliation of giving my reason, but I appreciate what is your due. You remember the tradition of an ass that opened its mouth and spake?"

"I am listening," said Mr. Luton.

"Well, I feel as though I were disgracing Balaam's beast in making this admission — it crushes me to the dust to confess that I have so far lost control of self as to become enamored of a married woman."

"Whew! that is a situation," expired Mr. Luton.

"God knows how I have striven against this passion, how I have endeavored to shut her out of my heart, but something stronger than prayers or the will of man has demon possession of me."

"You must not take the vagaries of the heart so seriously, Bernhard; the emotion is too ephemeral."

"I don't think I ever can or that I'll ever care to forget it."

"Oh, we're all as God made us, with a few birthday gifts from Lucifer — and light o' love is one of them," interrupted Mr. Luton in the tone of a married martyr.

"A man cannot but be the better for having loved such a woman," persisted Von Bernhard. "And such a woman!" he ejaculated in crisp interjections as he excitedly paced the floor; "born to be loved and praised — such eyes — such lovely, melting woman's eyes! Does her husband appreciate her but as a chattel? I doubt it. For in the months that I have been a daily witness, I have never seen Sin Claire give her one fond glance or word. I could endure it to see her loved, but as it is, I dare not stay longer lest I harm that — that husband of hers."

A light of understanding had been gradually dawning over Mr. Luton's perturbed features, and now he fairly beamed with relief.

"What! Have you been jealous of that insult to nature?"

Von Bernhard grasped the jolly scientist's hand and wrung it as he wrung out the words:

"It relieves me that you see him as with my eyes — that — that

that —. Were I to remain I would some day be tempted into challenging him, and thus bring reproach upon the woman I so insanely, shamefully, wickedly, desperately adore."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Luton with platitudinous calmness. "There is nothing about that amorphous thing to frighten you from here. And I have more than a suspicion that Electra is slyly fond of you."

Von Bernhard halted aghast in his nervous promenade. He had heard much of Chicago divorces, but had regarded the tales but as jests. Yet, what else could Mr. Luton mean? Immoral Paris was monastic in comparison with the will-o'-the-wisp weddings of Chicago. His high regard for Mr. Luton took a Humpty Dumpty fall. He looked at his strong, cultured face and carriage of authority, and marvelled that this truly great man, who was supposed to guard the honor of his family, should stoop so unmistakably to aid and abet in the severing of what God, supposedly, had joined together. He grew sick and faint with the thought and with the fear that Electra might be as devoid of principle as her relative. In the light of this revelation he was commencing to understand her aright — her angel face and demon heart — and without a moment of dangerous delay he would flee back to his Vaterland, where Loreleis were only of tradition.

Mr. Luton studied the young man's face as these and a thousand other thoughts meteored through his mind, and he seemed to be amused.

"Seeing that this isn't your exclusive funeral, Von Bernhard, I think I would better send for Electra and Sin Claire to come in to a family conclave. We may be able to adjust this *affaire du cœur* in a manner satisfactory to all."

Von Bernhard waited in a tremor of dread and disgust until the ill-assorted "twain in one" appeared. Was this crude, barbaric way of dealing with so delicate a matter the accepted American code? His sympathies, in the interim, had whipped about as winds in autumn. Just now he pitied poor Sin Claire — his chill and reticence had undoubtedly been engendered by some slight put upon him by this strange family. What fresh humiliation did the uncle intend inflicting upon that brilliant poet, whose misfortune as a husband held him to this household?

He watched Electra's face go all red as the rose in her hair when her uncle, after locking the door and drawing the curtains close, laid a hand on the arm of her husband, who, with his inscrutable countenance and Oriental immobility, had on entering merely acknowledged Von Bernhard's existence with a bow.

"Electra, Von Bernhard is of a mind to leave us on the morrow. It will rest with you to persuade him to prolong his stay. But first, as to a brother scientist, I have promised to exhibit the beauties of this husband-to-order of yours — no patent applied for."

Mr. Sin Claire remained statuesquely calm and apparently oblivious of the liberties which Mr. Luton, regardless of the protests of Von Bernhard, proceeded to take with him. The German's compassion for the husband changed into exasperation with the man who would permit himself to be manipulated like a mummy. His coat and cuffs were removed and his shirtsleeves turned back to the shoulder. Then pity reasserted itself in double-fold — the man was armless but for a pair of the most beautiful artificial limbs he had ever looked upon. But he could scarcely credit the testimony of his eyes when, along the inner side of each, he espied a line of electric buttons, labelled most peculiarly.

His scorn for the family yielded in turn to admiration for their tactful consideration in devising these makeshifts for the cripple in order to spare him public embarrassment, yet he could not pardon their indelicacy in parading their triumph over misfortune even before him.

"Sin Claire could never boast that he was a self-made man," said the uncle, assuming the rôle of showman, "for he is Electra's own creation, with not even a rib to start with. Here, take his arm in a natural way and see it bend of itself into the proper position. Press this button, and observe with what a rhythmical grace he walks — length of step and speed regulated by amount of pressure."

("What! has the hapless creature no legs?" ran the undercurrent of Von Bernhard's thoughts. "Electra evidently married that fragment of a man to care for and protect him. How I have misjudged this self-sacrificing, grandest of women!")

"Touch this button," continued Mr. Luton, returning from an

exhibitory promenade of the room, "and he will bow and wish you a 'good evening' from between the finest set of artificial masticators ever made for man. Why! — Electra, pour a glass of nerve tonic for Von Bernhard — your husband for bachelor maids appears to have shocked his sensibilities." For Von Bernhard had emitted a choked little "ach!" and sunk in a huddle on a convenient couch just as the poet's lips parted and the polite query came forth.

The wine brought new life to the prostrated Teuton, and as soon as he recovered his reason and his breath, he flung at them a succession of hyphenated questions:

"Isn't Mr. — this — whatever it is, alive? or is it one of your American jokes?" and so forth and so on.

"Mr. Crispin Sin Claire is a life-sized practical joke," explained Mr. Luton, answering the interrogations in arithmetical order. "The story of the creation of man dates from the persistent courting of some knights of the Golden Grail; and Mr. Crispin Sin Claire was brought into existence for the dual purpose of frightening the beaux away and of acting as escort to my wife on her daily pedestrian tours. He proved such a satisfactory gallant in this latter capacity that Electra proceeded to perfect him to his present social excellence. Since his invention, I have often wondered, judging from the number of blockheads at large, if other automatons were not imposing upon society."

"But his conversation — his poetry?"

"His voice, which is ever soft and low, is, when Electra or I manipulate him, restricted to these few phonographic remarks, labelled along this line of buttons. But Mrs. Luton is an accomplished ventriloquist, and he is only eloquent when with her. The poetry? Oh, yes, that is also Mrs. Luton's. My wife is one of your diffident authors who shrinks from the caustic criticism of friends. For years her rhymes have appeared under the *nom de plume* of Crispin Sin Claire, and so, when this automaton was constructed, she saddled upon him the name and the blame."

"But, madam your niece — is she not married?"

Madam the niece was at the moment intent upon rearranging some flowers, so her uncle made reply:

"Not yet, but she has hopes. She knew that when the right

man came along he would lose his head and heart, regardless of manikin. Now, Crispin, you hoax, I'll rehabilitate you into a *fin de siècle* Willie-boy and take you back to your doting aunt, whose company you are to grace this evening at some function or other." And Mr. Luton and the automaton bowed themselves from the room.

There was not a trace about Von Bernhard to suggest the wretched man who but a brief while since had been calling upon his Maker to pity his wretched love. He stood before the grate gazing hard into the blur of leaping light. His soul was aflame as with ethereal fire, but he seemed to have lost his presence of mind.

From the first hour of his coming, Electra, woman-wise, had divined all that he was passing through. She was a woman of science, and had resolved to take love in a very philosophical way when it should come to her. She had analyzed her emotions and knew what her answer would be when the crucial moment arrived.

At length Von Bernhard lifted his head and turned on Electra his open, radiant regard.

"Madam — Miss Luton, I find it difficult to readjust myself to these new conditions. If you wish it, I will order my man to unpack my traps."

"I do wish it, very much," she said, simply.

"Miss Luton, am I permitted to remain as a suitor for your hand?"

"Why not sue for the whole girl," suggested a hearty voice — Mr. Luton had returned. "Electra is no anatomical freak, like Sin Claire, to be dismembered at will — her separable charms are not of that nature, young man. Perhaps I would better apologize for swelling this company to a crowd at this inauspicious moment, but the War Department has telegraphed me requesting that I proceed at once to Cuba for the purpose of testing the utility of balloons in warfare. Von Bernhard, are you going along?"

"With pleasure, if you will first suggest how Miss Luton can extricate herself from her present anomalous position without the farce of a divorce or the appearance of committing bigamy."

"She shall be a war widow," declared Mr. Luton, with sudden inspiration.

And the Luton household was completely unmanned when husband and sweetheart and automaton, with their hastily devised apparatus, departed post-haste for the isle of the red war god.

. . . . . .

It was a burning day in July, the air quivered with needles of heat under a blazing copper sun. The land reeked with decaying vegetation and the moisture rose in fever mist from the rain-drenched jungles, where weird war flowers fell and burst into fiery bloom. The clattering of musketry and cannonading came sharp and persistent from the valley round El Caney, that lay a fathom deep under a drift of white battle smoke. From El Poso the field glasses gave no view of the action, and it was imperative to know.

In a gully away from that screeching, whizzing, whining storm of death the warriors of the air had constructed a rude laboratory and inflated their balloon. The car was stored with all essentials and the automaton, Sin Claire. Then Mr. Luton, with Von Bernhard, climbed over the wicker sides and loosed the straining ropes.

Up they soared above the screening bluffs and palm groves, and the Spaniards, looking skyward, discovered an airship of singular structure, with wing-like sails and tail-shaped rudder, steering seemingly at will above their fortifications, and wigwagging disastrous information to the besieging hosts. Instantly shot and shrapnel were directed toward it, but like a phantom thing it floated from point to vantage point until it hovered hawk-wise above a squawking brood. Then, with horrible expectancy, they watched a man lean far out over the basket's side and swing a fearsome shaped missile threateningly over their ranks.

"A bomb!" breathed a khaki-clad American, half way up El Caney's slope. But ere the words had left his lips, the aeronaut seemingly lost his balance, and, shell in hand, shot Phaeton-like down the steeps of the sky into the enemy's midst. There followed a shock that thrilled the hill, and when the battle rested for a space a Red Cross flag was set up near the spot where Crispin Sin Claire had sensationally met his end, and where the carnage upon his coming had been great.

But of the hero poet not a fragment was to be found for the sorrowing nurses to hold a funeral over — the winds were his fitting sepulchre, the grass his winding sheet.

Field glasses from El Poso had followed the airship's flight, and when Von Bernhard and Mr. Luton returned to *terra firma* they were greeted with charges of foul play. A recall from Washington was soon received and a court-martial threatened. The social cauldron seethed with rumors that had flown like birds from the different parts of earth and had flocked into one unlovely whole — rumors of a jealous uncle, of a too ardent Werther and a complaisant Charlotte, and a murder done.

Here they hung, or threatened to hang, on the horns of a dilemma. That cursed automaton, what a part it was playing in their lives, as evil as the apple by which earth's first family fell! The crisis must be met, and there seemed but one way.

This, friends and enemies, is the explanation that appeased the board of inquiry at the War Department, and is now offered to all whom it may concern.

The Yellow Tuft.*

BY DAVID BRUCE FITZGERALD.

HE new Colonel at Fort Wingate, in the desert of northwestern New Mexico, was very unlike the veteran Major, who had been a dozen years at the post, and their points of view differed in almost every conceivable particular.

As they sat one evening, at the close of a blazing, fiery day, in a corner of the long veranda of the Commandant's quarters, the Colonel discoursed on his favorite theme — which he had studied on Pennsylvania Avenue, exactly eighteen hundred miles distant as the crow flies — "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," until the Major began to revolve the question of applying for leave of absence. He hated argument — and there was not a pound of ice within two hundred miles.

Just then Sergeant James Maguire made an official report to the Colonel, saluted, clicked his heels and was marching off, when the Major brought him up standing with a word and requested him to tell the Colonel what happened at the Little Chusca Cañon. The sergeant flattened himself against the white weather-boarding, and in a deprecatory manner complied.

"Well, sir," he said, "it was at the time of the second Navajo uprising, with which, for pure devilishness, the first wasn't in it for a minute. About six o'clock one evening a ranchman came in from Manuelito with the news that the Navajos were out along the Arizona border, moving eastward and leaving an unpleasant trail. We mounted four companies and were off on the stroke of ten. But, Lord! we didn't dream what was ahead. When we halted at dawn next morning for breakfast, two half-breed Zuñi scouts came in and told us that we were up against the whole Navajo nation, with its war-paint on in broad streaks.

"The Captain considered a bit, and then ordered us to saddle and

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mount. We thought that meant falling back on the fort, but it really meant going ahead and holding the Indians in check till reinforcements could come up. With half a dozen scouts a mile in advance, we rode westward.

"At nine o'clock we sighted a fairly good-sized bunch of Indians — about two to our one — but that was nothing in those days. They made off to the north, intending to ride around and get between us and the fort, so we clapped the spurs in and went after them. I don't remember a nastier ride. This desert is a warmish sort of a place at the best — that day it was a furnace. The sun was so blazing hot it raised fever blisters on our souls. One poor fellow went clean daft. We couldn't have been wetter or steamier if one of the post washerwomen had poured boiling water over us.

"We brushed the reds three times that day, first at Jewett's stage station, next at Yucca Creek, and again at Gibson's, near the beginning of the foothills. Each time we rushed them, because there was nothing else to do, but they didn't stand worth a cent. Spotted Owl was the only Indian I ever knew who would stand out in the open and fight like a white man, but he had too great a fancy for green paint. It drew the fire of every man within range; he had eight bullets in him the day he died.

"About two hours before sundown the reds halted in the mouth of the Little Chusca Cañon. From their own standpoint, it was a beautiful place for a fight. The steep walls, a thousand feet high, protected their flanks. The gorge behind them ran back twenty miles into the mountains, and the floor of the cañon, near its mouth, was strewn with great boulders. An Indian just dotes on shooting through a crevice in the rocks.

"When our Captain — it was the Major, here — saw the situation, it worried him — begging his pardon — and he called the lieutenants aside for a talk. The upshot was that the Captain made us a little speech, the gist of which was that we were not going to round up that bunch of reds, and might as well be going, as the real circus was to be down on the plains. But he said that before we left he would like to give the Indians in front a scare that would keep them from hanging on to our trail.

"We saw it meant crawling, and answered by slipping from our

horses. We had half a mile to cover before the light failed, but the ground was covered with big rocks, and we crawled and dodged and made little runs, the reds taking snap-shots, but doing no particular damage.

"A hundred and fifty yards from the mouth of the cañon we reached an open place, sand-floored and bare as the palm of your hand, except for one big boulder in the centre. It would have been just simple suicide to try crossing. The Lieutenant shook his head, and sent back a sketch of the ground to the Captain.

"While we waited for instructions, I noticed two Indians behind the big boulder. It was a devil-may-care place to be, for if we charged they were done for, no matter what happened to us individually, and they had no way of knowing what we would do. They were safe enough for the time, so long as they kept behind the rock, and I sized them up as a couple of bucks anxious to distinguish themselves.

"'Billy Krim,' I said to the man next me, 'keep your sights on that big rock; there are a couple of reds behind it. Pass the word.'

"He nodded, squinting along his barrel. Presently he leaned over and laid his hand on the shoulder of Kelso, the man next beyond. I saw the two whispering together, and wondered, knowing they were not good friends. But, Lord bless you, sir, I was as unprepared as a child for what happened. The next moment I heard Kelso cry, 'I don't take a dare from no man, and least of all from you, Billy Krim.' Before I could more than rub my eyes, Krim and Kelso were up and running neck and neck for the rock, trailing their carbines and with their knives in their teeth. The Lieutenant yelled to them to come back, as we all did, but if they heard they paid no attention.

"Well, sir, that famous charge of Krim and Kelso was over in less time than it takes to tell it. The reds in the mouth of the cañon must have thought we were trying to play some trick, for they held their fire until the men had almost reached the boulder. Then there were half a dozen sputtering shots, and Kelso went down on his face. Krim ran clear past the rock, turned, raised his carbine and fired. Then he clubbed his piece and closed in. There was another shot, and Krim, when we found him next

morning, had a bullet through his lungs and was dead. Also the two reds, one shot in the eye and the other with his skull smashed. We always thought Krim must have gone mad with the heat that day.

"Of course, we couldn't think of drawing off and leaving the bodies of our men to be scalped. So the Lieutenant sent a detail to bring up food and water, and we spent the night behind our shelters, watching the open space between us and the mouth of the cañon, with instructions to shoot at anything that moved. Soon after daybreak we discovered that the Indians had decamped up the gorge, and the Lieutenant ordered half a dozen of us to bring in the bodies of Kelso and Krim."

"And you found them scalped?" It was the Colonel who spoke. The Major rubbed his hands softly together in the darkness.

"No, sir," answered the sergeant, "we found all four bodies, reds and our men alike, wearing the yellow tuft."

"The yellow tuft! What is that?" inquired the Colonel.

"I think, sir," said the sergeant, "it is what you would call a decoration for bravery in action. When a Navajo is killed in battle, and his people can't bring his body in and bury it with honors, they try at any rate to give him the tuft. It is a little bunch of yellow feathers, sir, bound with a string and tied on the forehead. Krim and Kelso both had it. Some red had risked his life in crawling out to the boulder during the night — and he had not overlooked the fact that our fellows were also in the scrimmage. Under the circumstances, we decorated the two dead Indians with a cavalry button apiece, tied around their necks, and buried all four in the same grave."

An Exploded Theory.*

BY CHARLES FORREST McLEAN.

HEY had all heard great stories of greater trout taken from Howe's Pool, a pond formed by the widening of a little stream which partially drained the range of hills near Phillips's ranch, then a half-day's ride from Seattle. Morse, now a mining monarch, was merely a prospector in those days, and one Sunday evening he and Milman, the city attorney, and Barnes, the general store keeper, were sitting in the little hotel office, discussing a proposed outing of a couple of days, when in came the fourth of their coterie, the rotund and genial Biller, puffing and blowing, but with elation in his eyes.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "I have the idea of a lifetime — an inspiration of genius! Let's spend our Friday and Saturday at Howe's Pool, fishing."

Biller's suggestion was hailed with acclaim and unanimously adopted without the formality of a vote. The few days intervening before their departure were filled with fish talk and active preparation, and those unacquainted with the destination of the party might have thought it was going around the world. Thursday evening found them in Phillips's rough but cosy sitting room, talking over the anticipated sport of the morrow. Everything so far had gone according to schedule, the only deviations from the programme having been made by Morse, who surreptitiously slipped into one of his many pockets two long-fused dynamite "U. V. Waterproof" cartridges from the mine house, and Tips, Biller's water spaniel, who at the last moment insisted upon accompanying his master.

A deliciously exhilarating morning found the anglers and their host engrossed in endeavors to lure from its dark depths the famous denizens of Howe's Pool, but the day slipped by without

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even a single "strike." Phillips apologetically admitted that the fishing was poor — "the day a bit too bright," and one or two other conditions not just perfect — to which his guests deferentially agreed, but with repressed displeasure. When the second and last day had almost passed with no better results, everybody was cross, even Tips refusing to indulge in the distracting amusement of barking and hunting shore birds.

It was then that Morse resolved upon the heroic measure for which he had come prepared. Assembling his fellow-followers of old Izaak, he cautiously broached his scheme for making sure of *some* fish — if there were any in the pool — even if they wouldn't bite. Its awful illegality — and perhaps the presence of the city attorney — brought forth a volley of objections, but eventually the thought of returning with overflowing creels, to turn the jeers of a scoffing crowd to envy and admiration, overcame the scruples of the most conservative.

Acting under Morse's instructions, all retired from the banks of the pool to positions from which they could just see its surface. A moment later a "long-timed" dynamite cartridge flew from his hand and, describing a graceful parabola, splashed fairly into the centre of the pond, where it floated, rocking gently upon the widening circles of ripples it had caused.

But while the fishermen watched with indrawn breath, they heard another and a louder splash. It was Tips, faithful to the instincts of a long line of retrieving ancestors, paddling as if for life, toward the floating infernal machine, while Biller, a hundred feet from the bank, alternately called his pet and raved and swore!

As Tips reached the cartridge, Morse was mentally calculating the number of seconds that would elapse before there would be no more dog, and it was not till the faithful animal, grasping the shell firmly between his teeth, turned suddenly shoreward, that the real horror of the situation flashed upon him and his companions. Then, with a united yell of dismay, they turned and very literally took to the woods, each man looking for the woodiest portion. As they dashed for cover, each hoped that, whatever the dog might do, it would not follow *him*. Tips had gained the bank, and as they ran they could plainly hear the pattering feet of that animated bombshell and the deep breathing and snorting of

poor Biller, who lumbered along in the rear, like a slow freight train over a rough track.

Almost simultaneously the thought came to the pursued that a dog always follows his master, and the others rejoiced that they did not own a dog, while they realized that the retriever was certainly following Biller, and so, looking backward to note his whereabouts, they crouched behind trees out of the line of his retreat and gazed fascinated upon the dreadful spectacle.

On wallowed Biller, in a frenzy of fear, the dog rapidly closing up the hundred yards intervening. Would the cartridge never explode? Could it be possible that the water or the dog's bite had rendered it harmless? Soon the question would be answered. On they rushed, the ponderous fugitive panting spasmodically as his pace flagged, too terrified to pick his steps and too breathless to cry aloud. But as he tripped over a fallen log and beheld Tips bounding towards him with wagging tail, he involuntarily emitted a hoarse shriek of hopeless terror. Just as he dropped safely behind the prostrate tree trunk there was a frightful detonation. Tips had vanished.

$10,285 For Story-Writers.

THE Black Cat Story Telling Tournament, now open, affords the opportunity of a lifetime to the man or woman who has a new and original story to tell in a fascinating manner. Never has the story-teller had so wide a field, so vast an audience or so great an opportunity for profit as to-day. One thing that stands in the way of the unknown writer is the partiality of publishers for great names and literary reputations. This counts for nothing with The Black Cat. With it the unknown writer has an equal chance with the well known. Merit alone governs.

The prizes offered range from $100 to $1,000 cash; a $2,100 first-class tour of the world by way of California, Hawaii, Japan, China, Ceylon, India, Egypt and Europe, consuming 179 days; round trips to San Francisco and Havana, with cash for all expenses; a $1,300 automobile, and many other cash prizes from $125 to $500 each should secure for The Black Cat readers the cleverest tales ever told. In addition to the prizes enumerated on the following page, aggregating $10,285, special awards of not less than $100 each will be given for stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, or an offer for their purchase will be made. The increased chance thus offered all competitors is shown by the fact that in previous contests more than $2,000 was paid for such unsuccessful but available stories. The Black Cat has blazed the path to profit for hundreds of writers before unknown.

The kind of stories likely to prove successful may be judged by reading some of the tales that have won in former contests. As the back numbers of The Black Cat containing them will soon be permanently out of print, the prize story Gripsack offer on another page of this issue is of special importance. It will be seen upon perusing them that the field is as wide as the universe, but that it is not necessary to go to strange places or far countries for a plot. It is quite as likely that better material will be found near home, among familiar surroundings. Mary Ann may prove a more interesting heroine than Queen Anne. Stored in the mind of every intelligent person is at least one original story — an incident or accident, personal experience or concept of the imagination — which, told effectively, cannot fail to interest. The merit alone of a story will have weight, and each manuscript will be measured by its value as a story for The Black Cat and not by its author's reputation.

Be sure to comply with all the conditions on page 43. They are simple and reasonable. A subscription to The Black Cat is required with each manuscript as a check upon wholesale offerings of undesirable stories.

Send your story as soon as possible to ensure prompt decision and early award of prizes. Do not wait until the latest moment.

BELOW is a list of the prizes. The capital prize--first-class tour of the world ticket--will be delivered to the winner with check covering expenses to Boston and return. The same applies to the 6th and 17th prizes. All cash prizes will be paid by certified check on The International Trust Company, of Boston. The Automobile, Piano, Angelus and Typewriters will be delivered, freight prepaid, at any railway station. If preferred, prizes Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 17, 23 or 24 may be converted into their cash equivalent, less the guarantee already paid to secure their delivery.

Total Prizes $10,285

1st.	Tour of The World, 179 days,	Actual Cost	$2,100
2d.	Surrey Automobile	Actual Cost	1,300
3d.	Cash		1,000
4th.	Cash		500
5th.	Crown Piano,	Actual Cost	500
6th.	Round Trip, Boston to San Francisco,		350
7th.	Cash		300
8th.	Cash		300
9th.	Angelus,	Actual Cost	250
10th.	Cash		200
11th.	Cash		200
12th.	Cash		200
13th to 16th.	Four Cash Prizes at $150 each		600
17th.	Round Trip, Boston to Cuba,		150
18th.	Cash		125
19th.	Cash		125
20th.	Cash		125
21st.	Cash		125
22d.	Cash		125
23d.	Fox Typewriter,	Actual Cost	110
24th.	Oliver Typewriter,	Actual Cost	100
25th to 39th.	15 Cash Prizes at $100 each		1,500

COMPETITORS may choose their own themes. We especially desire, however, stories in which the morbid, unnatural and unpleasant are avoided rather than emphasized. Good, clean, humorous tales are desirable. No dialect stories, translations, plays or poems will be considered; nor any story not submitted strictly in accordance with the conditions. We want original stories, out of the ordinary, free from commonplace and padding, and interesting throughout.

Conditions:

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full (if it is desired that the story be published under a pen name that must likewise be given), as also the number of words it contains, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000, but must not exceed the latter. Other things being equal, the shorter of two stories will be preferred.

2. Manuscripts must be plainly written (with typewriter or pen) on one side of paper only, on sheets not larger than 8 x 11 inches, must be sent unrolled, *postage or express charges fully prepaid*, and accompanied by addressed and stamped envelopes for return. Letters advising submittal of stories must be *enclosed with manuscripts*, not sent separately. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at writers' risk. Upon our payment for a story the author relinquishes to us all rights thereto of whatsoever nature.

3. Every story must be strictly original and must, neither wholly nor in part, have appeared in print in any language. Every story will be judged solely on its own merits; the name or fame of a writer will carry absolutely no weight. And furthermore, every story will be valued, not in accordance with its length, but with its worth as a story.

4. With every manuscript there must be enclosed, in the same envelope, one yearly subscription to THE BLACK CAT, together with 50 cents to pay therefor. On subscriptions to foreign countries 24 cents must be added for postage. All money should be sent by draft, postal money order, express money order or registered letter. One- or two-cent postage stamps in perfect condition will also be accepted. If competitors are already subscribers to THE BLACK CAT or submit more than one manuscript, their existing subscriptions will, if desired, be extended or the new ones may be taken in the names of other parties. Any competitor may send as many stories as desired, but with each story all conditions must be complied with.

5. All envelopes containing manuscripts as above must be plainly marked "For Competition" and addressed, "The Shortstory Publishing Company, 144 High Street, Boston, Mass." Their receipt will be acknowledged.

6. The competition will close February 26, 1902. The awards will be paid within 60 days thereafter, and announced in the earliest possible issue of THE BLACK CAT. Should two stories of equal merit be considered worthy of a prize, the prize will be either doubled or divided.

7. For stories unsuccessful in the competition but deemed desirable, we will either award special prizes, of not less than $100 each, or make a cash offer. All unsuccessful manuscripts, submitted as above, will be returned after the contest has closed. The conditions and requirements being here fully set forth, we cannot enter into correspondence relative thereto.

Important. *As no story will be considered unless all the above conditions are complied with, competitors should make sure that their manuscripts are prepared strictly in accordance therewith, are securely sealed in strong envelopes, and fully prepaid. Don't hold your story till the latest moment, but send it as soon as ready, thus facilitating earliest possible decision.*

The Shortstory Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.